



APRIL 2015 NEWSPAPER

HISTORIC TRANS WOMEN OF COLOR BRIEFING HELD AT THE WHITE HOUSE

On Tuesday, I attended a historic, first-ever briefing on issues facing trans women of color at the White House. Convened by the National LGBTQ Task Force, the briefing was held on the International Transgender Day of Visibility -- March 31 -- and during Women’s History Month. Panelists who took part in the briefing were comprised of Black, Asian American, American Indian and Latina trans people from from all over the country, with varied immigration statuses. The panelists were: Tracee McDaniel; Juxtaposed Center for Transformation, Inc., Ruby Corado; Casa Ruby, Mattee Jim; First Nations Community HealthSource, Bamby Salcedo; Trans-Latin@ Coalition, Dr. Ayana Elliott, FNP; The Elliott Group, LLC, Raffi Freedman-Gurspan; National Center for Transgender Equality, LaLa Zannell; New York City Anti-Violence Project, Kylar Broadus; National LGBTQ Task Force, Cecilia Chung; Transgender Law Center.



As a Latina trans woman, the briefing felt like a breath of fresh air; a rare moment where I could witness my community united together, speaking our truths and knowing that we were being heard. This year began in tragedy for my sisters; in just January and February seven trans women of color were murdered in the US, in addition to the killing this week of Mya Shawatza Hall. As someone who has worked to bring national visibility to this violence against trans women of color through the National LGBTQ Task Force’s #StopTransMurders campaign, I carry around with me every day the huge emotional weight of each of these murders, and it’s easy to lose hope. However, the inspiring transgender leaders present at the briefing -- including audience members from groups such as the Trans Women of Color Collective -- demonstrated that not only are we surviving, we are thriving.

We are living in a moment when, for the first time, a handful of transgender women of color celebrities have been in the public spotlight, including Laverne Cox and Janet Mock. Yet only 8 percent of Americans personally know a transgender person. When a trans person is in the news, except for rare exceptions such as when Laverne Cox was nominated for an Emmy, it’s almost always about violence. As Janet Mock recently wrote in her blog, “The names of our sisters shouldn’t only make headlines when we walk a red carpet or lay in a casket. Our visibility shouldn’t be subject to such extreme circumstances”

Yesterday’s briefing at the White House is one step to changing this narrative and bringing positive visibility to many more trans women of color. Each of the speakers, many of whom had personally experienced anti-trans violence, were an example of the resiliency and vibrancy of our community. Each of those present is working as an advocate to change the narrative about transgender lives -- that our lives matter, that we are hirable, that we deserve good jobs,

education, healthcare, safe housing and loving relationships free from violence. Trans people’s lives need to stop being criminalized; we are tired of being profiled and harassed by police; we are tired of being imprisoned simply for trying to survive; we are tired of being detained by immigration authorities when we come to the U.S. to escape from violence; we are tired of being harassed, assaulted and being denied medical care in jails, prisons and detention centers; and we are sick and tired of having to prove that we are human beings who deserve dignity and respect.

Structural violence and discrimination is an everyday fact of life for transgender people. According to the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 78 percent of trans people experience harassment at school, and 90 percent experience harassment or discrimination on the job. These and other factors lead to high unemployment and homelessness rates, which contribute to trans people being four times more likely to live in extreme poverty -- reporting a household income of less than \$10,000 per year -- than the general population. Trans people of color suffer the most from this structural discrimination, with 34 percent of black trans people, 28 percent of Latino/a trans people, 23 percent of American Indian/Alaskan Native trans people and 18 percent of Asian American trans people living in extreme poverty. It is clear that working towards economic justice must go hand-in-hand with our work to end violence against trans people.

On Wednesday night, at an office two blocks from the White House, I attended an inaugural celebration of the opening of the new national office of the Trans Women of Color Collective (TWOCC) and Casa Ruby’s new TransLife Center. Both organizations are founded and led by trans women of color, and both are engaged in powerful advocacy to ensure that our lives are valued. Economic empowerment and leadership development are central to the missions of both organizations. It is so necessary that we as trans sisters help each other access jobs, housing and other needs, because we best know how to care for each other. And we need our allies to support us with resources and opportunities that will allow our organizations to thrive. There is nothing more powerful and needed than trans women of color nurturing and supporting other trans women of color in becoming powerful new leaders and spokeswomen for our own liberation.

In February, at the National LGBTQ Task Force’s Creating Change Conference in Denver, nearly 100 transgender and queer people of color stormed the stage, unified by the message “Trans Lives Matter.” They called attention to the recent murders and structural violence against trans women of color, and the recent killing of queer Latina Jessie Hernandez by Denver Police. Bamby Salcedo, one of the panelists at the White House briefing, was also one of the leaders of the protest at Creating Change. During the protest she declared that Trans People of Color are in a “state of emergency” and presented a list of demands for how the LGBTQ movement can address this emergency. One of her key demands was that LGBTQ and allied organizations “leverage their access to policy makers and funders and use their privilege to support trans-led efforts in eradicating the ongoing structural violence that our community faces.”

Tuesday’s White House briefing demonstrated the commitment of the National LGBTQ Task Force to ending this state of emergency. While speaking with Bamby after the White House briefing she told me “the Task Force heard us.” But this is only a start, and we have a long way to go to. The LGBTQ movement has to continue to use our resources to center the voices of and support those most marginalized by systemic oppression including racism, transphobia and sexism. There is also a shameful history of the LGBTQ movement silencing and invisibilizing the very trans women of color who founded this movement -- Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and more -- that we must be accountable for and work to reverse.[...]

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Black and Pink
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SEND US YOUR ART!

This month’s header is by John in Indiana! Have your art featured in the Newspaper! We’ll feature a different artist each month! Send us a drawing that says, “Black & Pink” or “Black and Pink” or “Poetry from the Heart” for the headers! Header art should be around the size of the newspaper header! Smaller or larger images may be resized to fit. You can send us other art too and we will include it in the poetry page.

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Statement of Purpose
Black & Pink is an open family of LGBTQ prisoners and “free world” allies who support each other. Our work toward the abolition of the prison industrial complex is rooted in the experience of currently and formerly incarcerated people. We are outraged by the specific violence of the prison industrial complex against LGBTQ people, and respond through advocacy, education, direct service, and organizing.

Black & Pink is proudly a family of people of all races.

About this Newspaper
Since 2007, Black & Pink free world volunteers have pulled together a monthly newspaper primarily composed of material written by our family’s incarcerated members. In response to letters we receive, more prisoners receive the newspaper each issue!
This month, the newspaper is being sent to: **7,252** prisoners!

Disclaimer:
Please note that the ideas and opinions expressed in the Black & Pink Newspaper are solely those of the authors and artists and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black & Pink. Black & Pink makes no representations as to the accuracy of any statements made in the Newspaper, including but not limited to legal and medical information. Authors and artists bear sole responsibility for their work. Everything published in the Newspaper is also on the internet—it can be seen by anyone with a computer. By sending a letter to “Newspaper Submissions,” you are agreeing to have your piece in the Newspaper and on the internet. For this reason, we only publish First Names and State Location to respect people’s privacy. Pieces may be edited to fit our anti-oppression values and based on our Editing Guidelines.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO HOT PINK!
Seeking erotic short stories, poems, AND ART by Black & Pink incarcerated and free-world family members for a new ‘zine. To be mailed, art cannot include full nudity. Please send submissions (and shout outs to the authors from the first issue mailed in January!) addressed to Black & Pink - HOT PINK. This is a voluntary project, and no money will be offered for submissions, but you might get the chance to share your spicy story with many others! The zine will be sent 1-2 times per year. To subscribe to receive a copy of HOT PINK twice a year, write to our address, Black & Pink - GENERAL.

A MESSAGE FROM JASON

Dear friends,
I hope this note finds you as well as possible. As we are a national organization, and the newspaper goes all over the country, it takes a lot of reminders to myself not to start these letters with comments on the weather and how springtime is here in New England. Given that we are a group of folks all over, you probably don’t want to hear about the little flowers poking out of the ground here in Boston. You probably don’t care that it has been sunny and warm for days now, allowing me to bicycle around the city in just a t-shirt. But unfortunately for you, I’m a New Englander, and it is nearly impossible not to start everything with a comment on the weather.

While thinking about the weather I find myself remembering that April is the month when we celebrate and honor Earth Day. I recently looked up some of the history about Earth Day. The first Earth Day was planned in 1969 in California by a peace activist by the name of John McConnell. McConnell planned the celebration of the Earth at a United Nations gathering that was happening in San Francisco. His hope was that people would be moved to protect all the creatures of the planet with a respect for all life. This meant not only passing legislation to save forests, oceans, and the air but also to end the violence of war. While McConnell intended Earth Day to be on March 21st, the first day of Spring in the northern hemisphere, one year later a Democratic senator by the name of Gaylord Nelson introduced his own version of Earth Day to be honored on April 22nd. Following Senator Nelson’s lead, an organization called the Earth Day Network came into being to create resources to push forward policies that would protect the Earth. Today, however, the Earth Day Network is headed up by a person who spent many years as a corporate defense attorney, defending corporations who were violating environmental regulations. It makes me wonder what has happened to John McConnell’s original idea of Earth Day.

I must admit that I have not always been good at remembering to care about the environment. I forget to put things in the recycling bin. I use Styrofoam cups. It can be a bit embarrassing. The reality, though, is that things are really scary with our planet right now. The harms of global climate change are pretty terrifying. In our analysis, Black and Pink says that our goal is liberation. Our collective liberation is in jeopardy when our earth is in danger. As our ocean levels rise, we see island countries losing land and coastal cities losing homes. Rising sea levels harm poor communities first, those who are unable to get away or who depend upon the ocean front economy to survive (including those involved in the sex trade). On a global level, and right here in the United States, climate change causes the greatest immediate harm to communities of color and communities most marginalized by many forms of oppression. If we are serious as a family that we care about liberation, then we must also care about what is happening to our planet.

Climate change affects prisons too. How many of you have been in a cell with no air conditioning on a hot day? As the temperature continues to rise, those hot days are getting worse and worse. In an article about the prison, Rikers Island, Brentin Mock writes, “Rikers is an island inside of the urban heat island New York City, where temperatures can be up to 20 degrees F hotter than in surrounding rural areas...That intensifying heat felt by prisoners trapped in the un-air-conditioned facility is joined by denser concentrations of ozone pollution that worsens as the temperatures rise. The heat alone is a certified killer. The ozone only quickens death by exacerbating asthma and making it otherwise harder to breathe.” You may also remember when Hurricane



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Katrina hit New Orleans. The Orleans Parish Prison (OPP) was directly affected by the storms and the racist neglect of the government. According to a report by the Americans Civil Liberties Union, “As floodwaters rose in the OPP buildings, power was lost, and entire buildings were plunged into darkness. Deputies left their posts wholesale, leaving behind prisoners in locked cells, some standing in sewage-tainted water up to their chests.” Extreme weather, like the increase in destructive hurricanes, is a consequence of global climate change. It is important that we remember to include attention to our planet as we continue in our struggles know that once there were no prisons, that day will come again.

In loving solidarity,
Jason

A DECADE OF BLACK AND PINK

Anyone who is being released between now and September, PLEASE send us your outside contact information. We are planning a big gathering in October 2015 to celebrate 10 years of Black and Pink. We will be having a big party on Friday night and a weekend long conference to plan the next steps for Black and Pink. We will be able to pay for travel, housing, and food of those who attend. We will also offer a stipend of \$150 to formerly incarcerated people who attend.

BLACK AND PINK HOTLINE NUMBER!!!

After over a year of thinking about how to make this happen we are now announcing that people can call us. The phone number is **617.519.4387**. Your calls will be answered as often as possible. We are not currently able to set up accounts, so calls must be either pre-paid or collect. The hotline will be available Sundays 1-5pm (Eastern Time) for certain. You can call at other times as well and we will do our best to answer your calls.
The purpose of the hotline is for 3 primary things:
1. Story telling. We are trying to collect stories of incarcerated members to turn into a recording that we can play at our 10 year anniversary celebration in October. Your voices are important to us and we want to make sure they are part of this event. We want to make time to record your story if you give us permission.

2. Supportive listening. Being in prison is lonely, as we all know. The hotline is here for supportive listening so you can just talk to someone about what is going on in your life.

3. Organizing. If there are things going on at your prison in terms of lock downs, guard harassment, resistance, and anything else that should be shared with the public, let us know so we can spread the word.
Restrictions:
The hotline is not a number to call about getting on the pen pal list or to get the newspaper.
The hotline is not a number to call for sexual or erotic chatting.
The hotline is not a number for getting help with your current court case, we are not legal experts.

We look forward to hearing from you! This is our first attempt at this so please be patient with us as we work it all out. We will not be able to answer every call, but we will do our best. **We apologize that our hotline is currently only available to those who can make pre-paid calls.** We will have the ability to accept collect calls very soon, again, our apologies.

Dear Black & Pink Family,

My name is Robbie. I am a 32 y/o beautiful brown skinned American man. I am incarcerated in California. I am inspired and encouraged by the stories and articles in the Black & Pink newspaper. I was particularly moved by the poem on page 11 of the 2014 December issue entitled "Change" by beautiful Zachary from Idaho. I thought it was very real, very raw truth. I still, even today, hear the same message from society, that it is wrong to be me, or as Zachary wrote "Don't love him, for it is sin."

I have been misunderstood my entire life. I am in prison today because of a jealous vindictive lover. For a day we were free, like a sky full of stars (I love that Coldplay song :)) and I shared all that I had with him. I was kind and loving to him. I believe that I should not be limited in who I love, for love is unlimited. Anyway, he found out that I had another lover and did something very vindictive to me. Since I was the first guy he had feelings for, he formed an ownership attachment that is common in our community and in our society too. He came out to his mother who would not accept it. She convinced him that it was wrong to love another man and she went even further to convince him that if in fact he had a sexual encounter with another man that he must have been forced or manipulated in some way. This is an adult 19 y/o man at the time. Forced? Manipulated? Nothing could be further from the truth! Because he was bitter about the other guy he went to the police and made a report against me. He admitted that we spent time together, that he had taken a sexual performance pill prior to the encounter, and that he even went out with me later that night after the alleged encounter. Why would he if I had harmed him? The police and county were cruel to me. The police beat me mercilessly, tasered me, and had their K-9 dog bite a huge hole in my leg. At the hospital the police lied and said I was in a car accident. Had I not been tortured I would have never plead out to a lesser charge of sexual battery. I have NEVER sexually harmed anyone. I am a loving good person - that is why I am not afraid to get my story and name out there.

I only took the plea deal because I was suffering so much in solitary and I had an attorney that wouldn't invoke a defense for me, a queer man. I was alone. My family had drawn a line in the sand years before this over my sexuality, so they provided no help in building a defense for me. It has been a lonesome journey, but I still believe. I still hope. I can heal and love again. I need help, people. I have to register now because of what I explained happened with that guy that got jealous. Please, PLEASE submit any resources legal and otherwise you could publish and/or send my way for my particular situation. I would've never imagined being locked up because of my sexuality, but this happens. I will likely be paroling next summer to the Bay Area in California close to San Francisco.

On 1/2/2015 while out on the yard with some brothers I saw a double rainbow, one on each side of the sun and I heard in my heart... "never be ashamed of who you are." I believe that to be the voice of our Great Spirit - I believe we are loved and cherished by our Creator Spirit. The highest form of love in the Greek language of the Bible is Agape - a male-to-male love. I would encourage my brothers & sisters incarcerated to make use of any mental health programs or dual diagnosis programs at your disposal. Also make use of any college programs. Empower your mind. Find someone to help. We get better when we help others. I hope to return to our communities and inspire change and equality. Remember that we all matter and never let anyone devalue you. I love you all my beautiful brothers & sisters. Be good to each other.

Under the Rainbow in California,
Robbie, CA

B&P Family & Friends,

I know that each states DOC can be very different and I also know that everything is different through the eye of the beholder, so I'd like to share my opinion about prison life.

In October 2006, I was arrested on several felony charges. Fourteen months later, I was convicted and imprisoned as a sex offender, my victim being a female adult. I was sentenced to 10-life (10 years minimum- 99 years maximum). My BOP rehearing isn't until October 2021.

I understand how members of the family can be afraid of their prison journey; this is nowhere close to a utopia. But I also believe that the way we perceive things can really change our stay. I mean, there are gay haters in here, yes, but homophobes exist regardless of where we are. And there are many LGBT people in this nation too. And on the inside. I also feel that the way we present ourselves really makes a difference.

As I said, there are haters and always will be, but most inmates respect me for who I am, regardless of my conviction or sexual preference. That's because they receive the same respect. Live and let live. But when I can help a brother/sister less fortunate, I try to do so. It can be a big surprise how much the life of someone who feels alone can change by a simple action of "family" defense. Don't be afraid to stand up for the family! Light up the darkness!

With Peace, Love, Unity and Respect,
Timber, UT

Dear loving family,

I want to share a story with all of you, and though I don't know the exact details, I was here when it happened and I know it made an impact on quite a few people. Here's what I understand to have happened.

A guy on the unit was a sex offender (S.O.) and had been locked up a little while and became sick of seeing S.Os mistreated and abused by people who didn't even know the circumstances or even if an S.O. was actually guilty. So he and a few others got to talking about starting a "gang" of sorts who'd watch each others backs. Well apparently this got back to some "woods" on the unit and at rec one day soon after that, they confronted the guy. Well it started as most fights do, I'm told, where one guy attacked the w.w.; much to everyone's surprise however, the w.w. drops the first guy only to be attacked by another. It goes the same way as the first fight and a third guy follows suit until finally two guys jump the w.w., but shocking everyone, the w.w. deals with these two also before finally the laws get inside and end it all.

News of this fight spread like fire for a week. In the end nobody started a group after that, but nobody forgot the guy who stood up against the oppression.

That's why I share this story, in hopes of inspiring others to fight wrongful oppression and stand up for yourselves and your rights.

I don't know the "white wolf" guy's story as an S.O. but whether guilty or not he had a right to "freedom from oppression" and he stood for that right. More of us oppressed people need to do this.

I love you family and I thank you all for your wisdom, courage, and love. A special shout out to Aurora in June's edition of B&P. I love your letter girl, I have always quoted "to thine own self be true" and have plans to have it professionally and permanently done on my side. I'm glad to have family like you girl, much love and happiness to you.

Finally I'd like to say, I know that some might not have time to read an entire newsletter, but I want to strongly suggest that you all, especially, you transgender women, read the ACT article (The Advocacy Campaign for Trans-Women), and get involved!

Much love and heartfelt support to you all!

Yours,
Byron, TX

Dear Black and Pink family,

I really enjoyed the combined October / November issue! I am a 29 year old gay male who has been down for just over two years. Alcoholism has been a major struggle for me and a principal contributor to how I caught my armed robbery case in 2012. My minimum sentence would have been up in January of 2015, but last May I caught a new case here in prison.

I drank some when I first came to prison but soon made the decision to quit. I stayed sober for almost a year but when I was moved out to a facility in the Upper Peninsula, my depression kicked into high gear and I started drinking again. This new prison was 6 hours away from my friends and family, and I lost the supportive relationship I had with a man I loved at the previous facility. I think the DOC's ability to transfer us at any time for any reason is the cruelest aspect of incarceration. Stripped of all comfort and companionship, I turned to alcohol. I thought this would be consolation but instead it was calamity.

The regular officer in my unit constantly harassed me about my sexuality and one day when I was very drunk and in a blackout, I spit on him. I was brought to segregation for assault and charged with a felony by the state. I have been on administrative segregation for over 7 months now. I will be sentenced in January and then released back to general population. They are recommending an additional 2 years for my sentence.

I was really upset and ashamed of myself. I know I would never have reacted so outlandishly to the officer's ignorant comments if I had not been drinking and I would probably be going home next month. In segregation, I have had a lot of time to practice meditation and I am learning to forgive myself. There is no use in wallowing in guilt and shame. I see now that I can use this catastrophe as an opportunity to change and grow. If I am able to help somebody else in the future, then my struggles have not been in vain.

Sincerely,
Jae (Michigan)

Dear Black and Pink family,

I am an older gay guy, stuck in this prison for life. I often sit and think about the wonderful life experiences I've had. I got to thinking as far back as I could, trying to remember "when I knew" I was gay. There were obvious adventures that stood out, and here are a few...

When I knew...

I knew I was different when I spent the night at Randy's house in elementary school, and felt so great sleeping in bed pressed against him.

I knew I was different because I was in love with all the guys on "The Brady Bunch," "Eddie's Father" and "My Three Sons."

I knew I was different when others spent their allowances on candy and toys while I shopped for objects I could lubricate and slide inside me. Vegetables were my new best friends!

I knew I was different when I felt dead around my girlfriend but tingled all over when her handsome brother came around.

I knew I was different when instead of sniffing and masturbating with my sisters panties, I would try them on and wear them.

Now it’s your turn, Black and Pink family. I would encourage you to write to this wonderful paper and share with me and all of us, when you knew. I can’t wait to read your experiences. Stay strong. For the struggle,
Wiz Kid,
Texas

Hello Black and Pink family,
It is so good reading your letters in each newspaper. You let me know I am among friends and not alone in this prison complex.
Ever been in a room full of people and felt alone? Happens all the time in prison, right? Well, friends, we are not alone! We have each other! Look around and reach out to your fellow Black and Pink family members. They are easy to spot. We stand out amongst the straight population. We are the most beautiful people you see in these hallways and dayrooms.
It is difficult enough to be in prison, but to be in prison and be “different” is very hard. Sure we are different, but being different is a great thing. So find friends like you and stick together! Give each other big smile when you see one another!
Keep your heads up and stay strong! We will get through this together!
For the struggle,
Michael,
Texas

Dear Black and Pink Family,
Hey everyone it's your girl Nicki writing to all my fellow TLGBQ family currently incarcerated. I hope everyone is in good health and high spirits. As for me I am good! I've been here in the pound going on 18 months! Supposedly Texas is supposed to start kicking out all drug related charges! But we all know how this shit in the system works! I'll believe it when I see it.
I don't know if any of you remember me? I am a Hispanic transexual. I was an adult model / working girl before getting snitched on by my so called boyfriend. Now I sit here in this redneck Texas prison! Stripped of all the things I love dear. Like my freedom, my beautiful long hair, bra, etc. This shit is not cute! Not only do I get hated on by some (gay inmates), I get hassled by the (gay guards) and a couple of female ones too!! Luckily I haven't had anything extremely crazy happen, because I'm seriously just waiting for one of them (the guards) to make that wrong move so I can make the right one! And utilize my rights against them and suppression system.
The COs fail to realize by putting "us" in situations, they are putting "us" at bigger risk. Not only by them, but by the other inmates!!! I'm at a pre-release unit so it's cupcake here, but the guards are a lot crazier, but anyways to all the family out there dealing with these things, don't be afraid. Put that paper in their life. Especially my TS girls!! I love reading how empowering we all are becoming all around the world!!! Girls like: Laverne Cox, Cece, Isis are all paving ways for us!! Anything is possible! Keep your heads up my love!
Also shout out to you all my sisters and brothers that work out!! Work bitches lol... I recently lost 36 pounds. I stopped eating spreads weekdays and only spread on weekends. Basically weekends are my cheat days. I don't overindulge though. And drink lots of water and I've incorporated strength training into my workout. I do squats, lunges, squat thrusts, etc and I do a lot of cardio and abs. Also I love planks. I get a subscription to Shape and Fitness mag! So I use their workouts too!
I love you all!! Till then your sister,
Nicki, TX

Long time reader, first time writer.
First I want to send love to all my brothers and sisters, awesome sauce. Alright, down to business. I’ll start with a small brief of me. I am a 26 soon to be 27 MTF who is serving a 25 70%. I love reading the paper every month, sometimes it’s the only mail I get. The letters in the paper gave me the courage to come out to my mother finally.
Still no thoughts on it from her, but she has reassured me no matter what she loves me for me.
I have always felt as if I was being forced into a “norm” when i was young. I was the “strange” one in the class. Playing with dolls and not the cards. Throwing a fit if I couldn’t be the “Mom” in a game of house. Always told “No thats for little girls, you’re a boy! You know the jist. I conformed to a point. Borrowed my sisters clothes without anyone knowing etc.
I fought with the whole thing internally for years. Every time I had a chance to breach the subject, I would make some excuse not to, or, it wasn’t the right time.
Once I got on my own. I was Sean by day and Vanessa by night. I had my own wardrobe, makeup, etc...When my family would come over I would make the excuse “oh my girlfriend must have left that here” stupid stuff you know deep down they don’t believe. Ignorance is bliss, or so they say.
Doing all the hiding, being dual persons takes a strain on your mind. As it did with me, I was paranoid of someone finding out... my “dirty little secret” (my mothers words not mine.) I developed a form of schizophrenia and was having panic attacks in the middle of stores, I was bulimic and anorexic, I had insomnia, and to top it all off I lost my freedom, my will, my child & my sobriety.

I had no idea what was wrong with me, so I medicated with things that made me not feel - pot, cocaine, LSD, shrooms, and pills. I was suicidal and hated myself. I tried to find any information I could online, but the most I found was “her heroic story” crap articles.
I told you all that so I could tell that one sister out there who is screaming at the top of her lungs to be heard. You are not alone. When you walk into that room filled with who you decided to bless with your heart, enamored, open to the wounds that will come, know in that blessed beautiful heart, you do not stand alone. You stand with an army of your sisters and brothers behind you. Know, you are not alone. I feel as if I can’t say it enough. Please know that you are never going to be alone in your walk. I stand with you hun.
I hope that I have reached someone who is in mental limbo, who is terrified of opening that door. Goddess knows, I was.
I have met so many of my sisters since I was first incarcerated in 2011. It angers me that Iowa does not have a policy to help. All they have is a policy to hinder. I have had them either laugh at me me or say “it’s just a phase”. My a\$\$, a “phase” lasts a few months not a life time. So, wish me luck. I am going to start the light for transwomen in Iowa.
In my opinion, it is cruel & unusual punishment to be forced to live in a prison inside a prison. I find that my gender in a prison & I am long over due for discharge from the prison of being male.
For now & always
Vanessa, Iowa

LIKE A RABBIT (JUST BECAUSE YOU’RE TRANS, YOU ARE ALL ABOUT SEX)

Life as a transgender woman in the male prison industrial complex is ripe with drama and landmines, that force us women to live a life of tip-toeing on eggshells. Many people have a tendency and desire to interpose their own uncontrollable lust onto others around them, especially men, who seem to assume that since they would screw pretty much anything with tits and a heart-beat, that women and trans women want to get laid by any man with a heart-beat.
Just recently, I experienced this misconception once again; being housed among men means that I’m often accused of hitting on and “chasing” guys in my unit or watching them in a sexually lustful manner. As I said recently, I was the butt of rumors that said I was hitting on and pushing myself on three “straight” guys in my unit; even though this was COMPLETELY untrue, it was taken as the truth by the masses due to my being transgender. This becomes a dangerous game because it invites violence, paranoia, and potential sexual assault against the transgender individuals in that environment. Such is why transgender women will NEVER be safe within a male-populated facility. How are we supposed to address this kind of situation? The trans women are forced to live with not only the “normal” unwritten “prison code” but we’re forced to live subjected to many unwritten “codes” and rules of conduct/”engagement” that only apply because we live outside the accepted gender binarism of the community/environment.
Every day we are subject to cat calls, heckling, and vicious gossip about our every move and breath. How can we live in such an environment safely? Thus we are thrown into a massive liberty issue where we are forced to be sheep amongst a pack of wolves, and our safety & well-being is in jeopardy every day.
Fight for love and life
Jakaelynn, NY

Black-and-Pink,
I do hope you will print this letter for me.
It is a sad time at FCI Petersburg in Virginia. On February 24, 2015 a very dear transgender sister took her life. She let the prison system win. “Ashley” was my best friend on this yard and it saddens me to know that the system took another one. Ashley fought for several years to get the transgenders on this yard hormones and makeup. She was a fighter and fought the BOP at every angle, she could. She was also in court to get her name change and several other issues. She was at the winning point. Because of her, almost all the transgenders are on hormones and make-up is just around the corner. She is greatly missed and will never be forgotten. She will always be in my heart. It makes me mad because of how the officers and staff here done her. It seemed that some went out of their way to disrespect her by calling her “Sir” or telling her to wash off her home-made make-up or taking her “girly” things like earrings, panties, and bras. It makes me wonder, how many more will the system take! Ashley begged these people for help but none of the staff helped. Now they want to offer their offices and their ears to the rest of us. Where was these people at for Ashley. She was the one that needed their ears. How can they help the rest of us when they couldn’t help her? I need my friend back. The one that walked the track with me while my man was at work, the one that stood outside the bathroom door while I used the restroom, the one that helped me catch the seagulls and name them, and the one that helped me get medical attention. I want Ashley back. Not a day goes by I’m not thinking of her. Everywhere I turn there is a reminder of her. Brothers and sisters, please be strong. Don’t fall weak and let the system win. We should beat the system. We should come out on top. The prison officials don’t care about us. We have to care for each other and not turn our backs on each other. We are all we have. Be strong, stand up for our rights. Stand up for all the Ashley’s in the system that gave up the fight. Please pray for all of Ashley’s family and true friends. Let’s keep fighting the “Ashley’s fight!”
Thank you
Precious, VA

The total thrust is global justice
so we gotta fix the politics
and put a check upon its economics
or before you know it a warrior-poet
may try to upend the
corporate agenda that's
got 'em blind to the real bottom line
It's intense when you sense the only interest
on the docket
are fat cats with Republic-crats
in their pocket
It's crooked now
just look at how
the pundits are funded
They're devious at CBS and, yes,
they'll choose the news that fits the script unless
I play tricks on the matrix
The folks know my artform
comes straight from the heart for 'em
A lyrical storm that departs from the norm
and transforms as I'm givin'
rhymes for the minds in the times that we live in
I can't hang wit the anguish
and I don't want my language to languish
'cause there ain't nothing like Drew's hip hop
haikus
I got a mandate to disturb the urban landscape
we got tyrannies right here in these states
and you never know when they'll go
right back to some tactics like COINTELPRO
If we could see through the lies
to see how they brutalize and get cops
to beat speech in the streets and guard sweat-
shops
I'm ending these industries
please can we factor the
effect to the trajectory
this whole place is racist
and sexist from North Dakota down to Texas
with the twenty-first century's
youth in penitentiaries
and the night never seemed this dark
but now half of the stars are behind prison bars
Oh say can you see?
But if we can dream a new day it may be
you had to know the baddest bro
with the phattest flow would shake up the status quo
with my adjectives and my adverbs and my ad libs
- and like Gandhi
Protest is my medus operandi
It like Malcolm and Martin's evolution
With art and revolution
'cause the total thrust is global justice

Love & Liberation

Jerry, KS



Art by Daniel, ID



Art by Michael, NV

MY DYLAN, MY PET, MY LOVE

How I loved to softly gaze upon you
as you looked to something else

The way I could catch your root beer eyes
and soft smile makes my heart swell.

I loved the tender little moments
we shared like sweet picks of chocolate

A touch, our fingers intertwined
or just your nearness makes my heart beat.

You were afraid that I could forget you
that another man could steal my heart?

I lay awake remembering you
my soul, belongs to you, my all, my heart.

It did not matter to me that our flesh
had not, could not, has not yet joined

I simply loved you, all of you, our bond
so intimate, so spiritual, so kind.

I loved the way you extend your care
to everyone around us

How you try to include them all
make everyone feel wanted, special, loved

I hated to see you hurt or afraid
to know that anyone ever let you down

I hated to see you hurt or afraid
to know that anyone ever let you down

It pained me to know your abandonment
and I could not stand to see you frown.

How my heart thrills and lips still
tingle to the memory of kiss

Tenderness, just lips, tongue tasting
and the way you held me to your bliss.

That is enough to carry me forward
to wage wars and battle time

I will carry forever this torch I bear
and, if you wait for me, you are mine.

The morning you chose me I misted
I felt the immediate connection

The leash handed between us tethered
The collars that love blessed us

My Dylan, soft and pure and sweet
the angel whose wings still beat

In my darkness, my salvation, my love
I am Raevehn -> resurrected -> I am your mate

Raeven



Art by Hoichi, TX

OUR STORY

As I sat in the dark and watched you sleep,
I prayed to God for our souls He'd keep
For I know that both of our hearts are weak
in the pursuit of hope that we seek.

I listen in the quiet to hear you breathe,
cause it eases an ache I couldn't relieve.
So now I'm trying to figure out a way
to express my feelings to you this day.

I was happy to see you awake and rise,
and these feelings keep catching me by surprise.
Cause I've tried to respect you wanting to change,
yet I'm experiencing things that I don't feel are strange

A yearning I have to gently touch your face,
your sweet lips I have hope to be able to taste
To hold you lovingly within my arms,
and shield you from whatever may cause you harm.

To speak of love to you and see you smile,
that you'd long for my presence for a while.
The more I see of you, I want to uncover
the ache in my heart is the desire of a lover.

I want to share in all of your trouble and pain,
to wash away the hurt if any would remain.
I want to encourage you that life is good
and to find a happiness together if we could.

I want to make love to you in the night,
To love you forever darling with all my might.
When you're gone for a bit truly you'll be missed,
And I'll eagerly greet you back with a loving kiss

Please tell me, Love, that you are not offended,
For you're my angel which has descended.
Join me now, and we'll go even higher
Nothing will ever extinguish our passionate fire.

Let me be the one that can touch your soul,
bound together in love, we both become whole.
I can't see how loving you could be a sin,
when love is preached that we should win.

My hell was not having you in my life,
and I wish to cherish you as mate or wife.
The only thing now is the love we make,
the passion we give and hunger we slake

Love doesn't come in one certain way,
only that if true it will endure as love may.
So darling to you, I now give my all,
Together we'll rise higher or together we'll fall

Eugene, FL

IS THERE ANYONE WHO MISSES ME...

Is there anyone who misses me
Anyone who thinks about me
Is there anyone there to comfort me
Possibly confide for me
Anyone there to listen it's me
Is there anyone to come and hold me
Just once in life cold it be about me...
Someone out there who misses my sense of humor
Someone to take in my style in all its glamour
Someone who misses emotion and empathy and wants to explore...
Someone who just misses my company
Someone that only wants me, and nothing from me

Is there anyone who misses me
Misses me for being me,
Misses that my spirit is free...
Misses my calm and cool
It's all love here, no ridicule...
Some say at times I am too kind
Yet I'm so far from anyone's mind...
Is there anyone who misses me...

Someone out there who thinks about me
Somebody to cater to me
I'm not needy just wanna feel like a VIP
Someone to endure my pain
To rub my bones when it rain
Someone to help me get through the rough terrain
For the life of me a lock on love is hard to sustain
I would not complain if I was on a ball-n-chain...
No care - concern - commitment makes life's future hard to see
Just once in this life can it be about me
Is there anyone who misses me..."

Drew, PA

MY OPEN-BOOK

I was born, I cried
I laughed, I breathed
and always told;
I wear my emotions on my sleeve...
but this is something,
that I am unafraid to admit
because, I am real & honest,
and it keeps me legit...
now- these are just a few things,
that I'm very proud of...
as a god-fearing man,
who's so full of love...
I don't speak on opinions,
I work with actuality...
comfortable in my own skirt,
confident with my sexuality...
I have a woman's touch,
but a man's style
(yet), my heart is willing to accept,
whoever makes me smile...
for I'm like a living-sponge,
observing everything in my heart with my mind
and as I learn, teach and grow,
I'm able to wring it out on my own time...
and I won't stop here,
even when times get too rough...
I have a long-ways to go,
and I can never learn enough...
my: prologue & epilogue,
has always given me a good look...
but my dialogue is more than cover-pages,
I am an open book

Tone, PA

THE POWER WORDS LIST BY THE KNOTTED LINE PART II
CONTINUED FROM MARCH 2015 ISSUE

Editor’s note: This is the first page of of a resource from The Knotted Line curriculum that explores “exploring the historical relationship between freedom and confinement in the geographic area of the United States.” The Power Words List also includes the following activity to encourage people to think about how power operates in their lives. Thinking about how power operates in our own lives can be difficult. If you choose to answer the questions, be gentle with yourself while you explore the answers:

WHAT IS POWER?

Power is the ability to make action happen.

Power can be negative or positive. Power is the ability to make action happen.

Power appears in every level of human life: public, personal and internal.

Power can be visible or hidden/invisible.

Power is not just between people, there can be power in institutions, knowledge, customs or beliefs.

Read through the list of “Power Words.” These are words that describe different things having to do with how power works in our lives.

- 1) Which of these words are you familiar with? Write those word the definition.
- 2 Are any of these words describing something that you experience or think is important in your own life? If so, which ones? Why?

WORDS AND DEFINITIONS

OPPRESSION (INTERNALIZED AND EXTERNAL)
Internalized: holding yourself down (I’m not good enough) External: someone holding you down or back

COLONIALISM
Take over another’s land, by force, by religion, by culture... for the purpose of stealing their resources

NEOCOLONIALISM
Controlling someone’s land at a distance... indirect rule

HOMOPHOBIA
Fear of people and actions that aren’t straight

MILITARISM
Using military thinking and means to deal with any situation

ASSIMILATION
Changing ones culture, actions or appearance to fit mainstream

WHITE SUPREMACY
When being white is seen as normal and/or best

XENOPHOBIA
Fear of difference

ABUSE
A violent, misuse of someone or something (verbal, physical, sexual...)

MATERIALISM
When ‘things’ are the most important aspect of society or a person’s life

AGENCY
One’s ability to act in a situation or society

VIRGINIA ‘BANS THE BOX’

Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe signed an executive order Friday to remove all questions regarding criminal history from applications for state government jobs. Agencies can still conduct a criminal background check on a job candidate, but only after finding him or her otherwise qualified for the position.

Speaking at a local Goodwill store in Richmond, Virginia, McAuliffe tied his action to the upcoming Easter holiday and its focus on turning over a new leaf. “We should not seal the fate of every man and woman with a criminal record based on a hasty verdict,” he said. “If they are eager to make a clean start and build new lives in their communities, they deserve a fair chance at employment.”

Though the Department Of Labor doesn’t track the unemployment rate among those returning from jail or prison, studies have found that it’s about 60 to 75 percent for individuals a year after their incarceration. Difficulty securing a job is a major reason so many returned citizens commit another crime and return to prison.

Before signing the order, McAuliffe also expressed concern that consequences of “checking the box” on a job application and disclosing a past criminal conviction has a disproportionate impact on the state’s workers of color. “We all know that this box has an unequal impact on our minority families,” he said. “One study found that 34 percent of white job applicants without a record received a callback, while only 17 percent of those with a criminal record did. Among African Americans, 14 percent without a criminal record received a callback while only 5 percent of those with a record heard back from a potential employer.”

The order encourages, but doesn’t require, Virginia’s private employers to ‘ban the box’ as well — and praises those like Target, WalMart and Home Depot that have already done so.

Virginia’s move follows similar laws passed in Georgia, Nebraska and a handful of others states as well as the District of Columbia to combat hiring discrimination against workers with criminal records.

The National Employment Law Project estimates 70 million American adults have arrests or convictions in their past that can make it difficult for them to obtain employment.

Originally published on Think Progress by Alice Olstein. April 3, 2015

REASONS WHY PEOPLE BEGAN A PENPAL FRIENDSHIP! <3

I saw that I had a chance to correspond with an incarcerated individual, and wanted to take the opportunity to offer friendship and positivity to someone who may need it. I hope to learn from my pen pal, and strike up a valuable friendship.

because i have a cousin in prison and he feels so lonely and i miss him so much but they wont let us see/write him so having the chance to write and help someone feel important and less lonely :)

I think everyone deserves a friend to talk to.

Have heard countless people on the inside say that receiving letters kept them sane -- and have learned a lot about trust and solidarity from pen pals in the past.

I’ve spent roughly 3 years of my life in different psychiatric institutes. It can feel like it will never end. People need hope.

I recently came out to my parents and having been in the closet so long i understand how it is to survive in an unwelcoming environment. With that being said I wanted to make an impact on LBGTQ community and help someone like they helped me when I was lost or in bad situation. I want to return the good that was done to me.

My Father was actually in prison for some time, I refused all contact with him, He was recently released, and I suppose I’m trying to make up for the fact that I couldn’t be there for him during his hardest times. I wanna do my part and support someone who needs it and maybe even make a new friend!

FEDERAL JUDGE: CALIFORNIA PRISON MUST PROVIDE SURGERY TO TRANSGENDER INMATE



A federal judge in California has ruled that a transgender prisoner must be provided with the sex reassignment surgery (SRS) that her doctors have said is medically necessary “as promptly as possible.” The prison’s blanket denial of SRS for any trans inmate violated Michelle-Lael Norsworthy’s rights to adequate medical care under the Eighth Amendment, which protects against cruel and unusual punishment.

Norsworthy’s case closely mirrors Michelle Kosilek’s case in Massachusetts, which she recently appealed to the Supreme Court. Norsworthy was convicted of murder in the second degree with use of a firearm in 1987 and sentenced to seventeen years to life in prison, though she has been eligible for parole since 1998. In prison, she has been allowed to identify as a woman and provided some hormone therapy, but has been denied SRS.

Not unlike what transpired in the Kosilek case, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) sought out the medical opinion of someone predisposed against offering SRS to patients. Norsworthy was referred to Dr. Stephen Levine, who insisted that the standards of care created by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) require patients to live “a real life experience” for one year prior to SRS, an opportunity inmates cannot have. He also described SRS as “always an elective procedure. There is no immediacy to it.”

In reality, the WPATH standards only specify “one year of continuous living in a gender role that is congruent with one’s gender identity,” which Norsworthy has done for years. The standards also specifically state, “People should not be discriminated against in their access to appropriate health care based on where they live, including institutional environments such as prisons or long-/intermediate-term health care facilities.”

U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar eviscerated Levine’s expert testimony in his ruling. “The Court gives very little weight to the opinions of Levine,” he wrote, “whose report misrepresents the Standards of Care; overwhelmingly relies on generalizations about gender dysphoric prisoners, rather than an individualized assessment of Norsworthy; contains illogical inferences; and admittedly includes references to a fabricated anecdote,” adding that “his opinion is not credible because of illogical inferences, inconsistencies, and inaccuracies in the report.”

The CDCR also argued that Norsworthy’s symptoms, including ongoing mental anguish and recurring suicidal ideation (including two suicide attempts), could be managed with hormone therapy and counseling. But without SRS, she faces critical physical health concerns as well. Norsworthy has been raped in prison on six occasions, “including one 2009 incident in which nine inmates assaulted her over a period of six hours,” which led to her being infected with Hepatitis C. The Hepatitis C is damaging her liver, damage that is exacerbated by the hormone replacement therapy provided by CDCR. Norsworthy happens to also be allergic to spironolactone, the most common anti-androgen used in treatment of transgender women, which requires her to receive an alternative that increases her risk for breast cancer, heart disease, and liver toxicity. SRS would reduce her dependence on the hormone treatments that threaten her health.

Tigar also found in favor of Norsworthy’s complaint that “prison officials were deliberately indifferent to her serious medical need” based on “compelling evidence suggesting that prison officials deliberately ignored her continuing symptoms of gender dysphoria and the recognized standards of care; that they were deliberately indifferent to the recommendations of her treating health care provider; that CDCR’s reasons for denying SRS are pretextual; and that CDCR has a blanket policy against providing SRS for transgender inmates.” In particular, the prison overrode the recommendation made by Norsworthy’s doctors by “deliberately seeking out a contrary opinion.”

The Transgender Law Center, which helped represent Norsworthy, applauded the decision. Executive Director Kris Hayashi noted, “There is a clear medical consensus that health care related to gender transition is necessary—and life-saving—for many people. This decision confirms that it’s unlawful to deny essential treatment to transgender people. With this historic decision, Michelle will now be able to get the medical care she desperately needs.”

In a filing issued Friday for a similar case, the Justice Department condemned prisons that don’t provide adequate medical care to transgender inmates. The CDCR has not decided whether it will appeal the decision or not.

Originally published on Think Progress by Zack Ford. April 3, 2015.

THE MEDICAL INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The following is a visual* of the Medical Industrial Complex (MIC) and is offered as a tool for our work for collective liberation. It was created so people could begin to get a sense of what the MIC is and all it encompasses. I have found that many people understand the general concept of the MIC, but don’t always know what it actually is beyond hospitals. The MIC cuts across all of our work and continues to be a major site where ableism is manufactured, perpetuated and fed. Any of our work to challenge and transform the MIC and its influences must have a sharp analysis and history of ableism. For example, when fighting for healthcare, let us remember that we cannot simply fight for the right to receive care, but also the right to refuse care.

This is an evolving visual that will continue to be updated. At the bottom of this post, is a non-visual breakdown in outline form. This is not an exhaustive listing of every single part of the MIC, but rather an overview, offering examples of the many sites, sectors, professions, fields and institutions that make up the medical industrial complex. There are many more we could add. For example, there could be a whole other section dedicated to animals, especially the ones that are part of our food source, and all the genetic engineering, drugs, hormones, supplies and services that they receive. It is important to remember that the impacts of the MIC ripple out and are felt past what is listed here.

The Medical Industrial Complex is an enormous system with tentacles that reach beyond simply doctors, nurses, clinics, and hospitals. It is a system about profit, first and foremost, rather than “health,” wellbeing and care. Its roots run deep and its history and present are connected to everything including eugenics, capitalism, colonization, slavery, immigration, war, prisons, and reproductive oppression. It is not just a major piece of the history of ableism, but all systems of oppression.

Oppressed communities have had long and complicated histories with the MIC. From the continued targeting of disabled bodies as something to fix, to the experimentation on black bodies, to the pathologized treatment of and violent attempts to cure queer and trans communities. From the humiliating, lacking or flat-out denial of services to poor communities, to forced sterilization and dangerous contraceptives trafficked to young women of color. From the forced medicalization used in prisons today, to the days when the mental institutions used to be the jails, and the ways that “criminal” and “mentally disabled” are still used interchangeably. From the lack of culturally competent services, to the demonization and erasing of indigenous healing and practices. From the never-ending battle to control populations through controlling birth, birthing and those who give birth in this country, to the countless doctors and practitioners who have raped and sexually assaulted their patients and the survivors who never told a soul. From all the violence that was and is considered standard practice, to the gross abuses of power.

In flushing out what the MIC is, we are naming a system. We are calling attention to the systematic targeting of oppressed communities under the guise of care, health and safety. Like other oppressive systems, there are many individuals within the MIC that do good work. There are many people who went into the MIC intentionally to serve their communities because they want to change the system and provide reliable and safe care to those who need it. There are many people working inside the MIC who see first-hand its bureaucracy and hypocrisy. They help many of us find loopholes, shortcuts and life rafts through.

We are not saying that there are no useful or helpful things within the MIC. It has saved many of our lives or the lives of people we love. We are not anti healthcare or science, but are rather exposing the reality that many of us are dependent on the MIC while we are simultaneously trying to change it and ultimately build alternatives to it. Many of us don’t want to have to turn to the MIC, yet have few other viable options. And still many of us are fighting for access to current (or better) services within the MIC. There are no easy answers and the contradictions we are living in are often painful and unjust. Similar to our work to resist and challenge capitalism or to create alternatives to the police and prisons, resisting and challenging the MIC is rife with complexity and there is so much we need that we don’t have yet.

We are asking, why we have so few options when it comes to our healthcare needs? And why insurance and pharmaceutical companies get to call the shots on the kind of care we receive—or don’t? Why don’t we talk more about the ways that forced medicalization has become part of our prison system? Or how non-western and alternative healing practices are often no less ableist than western medical practices? We are asking, what could “health,” “wellness,” “care,” “accessibility” and “sustainability” look like in practice, outside of theory? We are revealing where and how the MIC is already in our lives in ways we might not have thought of before. We are urging us all to connect the MIC to our political work, because healing, wellness, care, “health” and disability are part of whatever liberatory work we are engaged in.

This offers us tremendous opportunities for coalition and cross-movement work because we all have a shared stake in our individual and collective wellness and healing.

Continued on Page 9...

...Cont from Page 8 If anything, the damage the MIC has inflicted on our planet should be enough for us all to dream and invest in building alternatives.

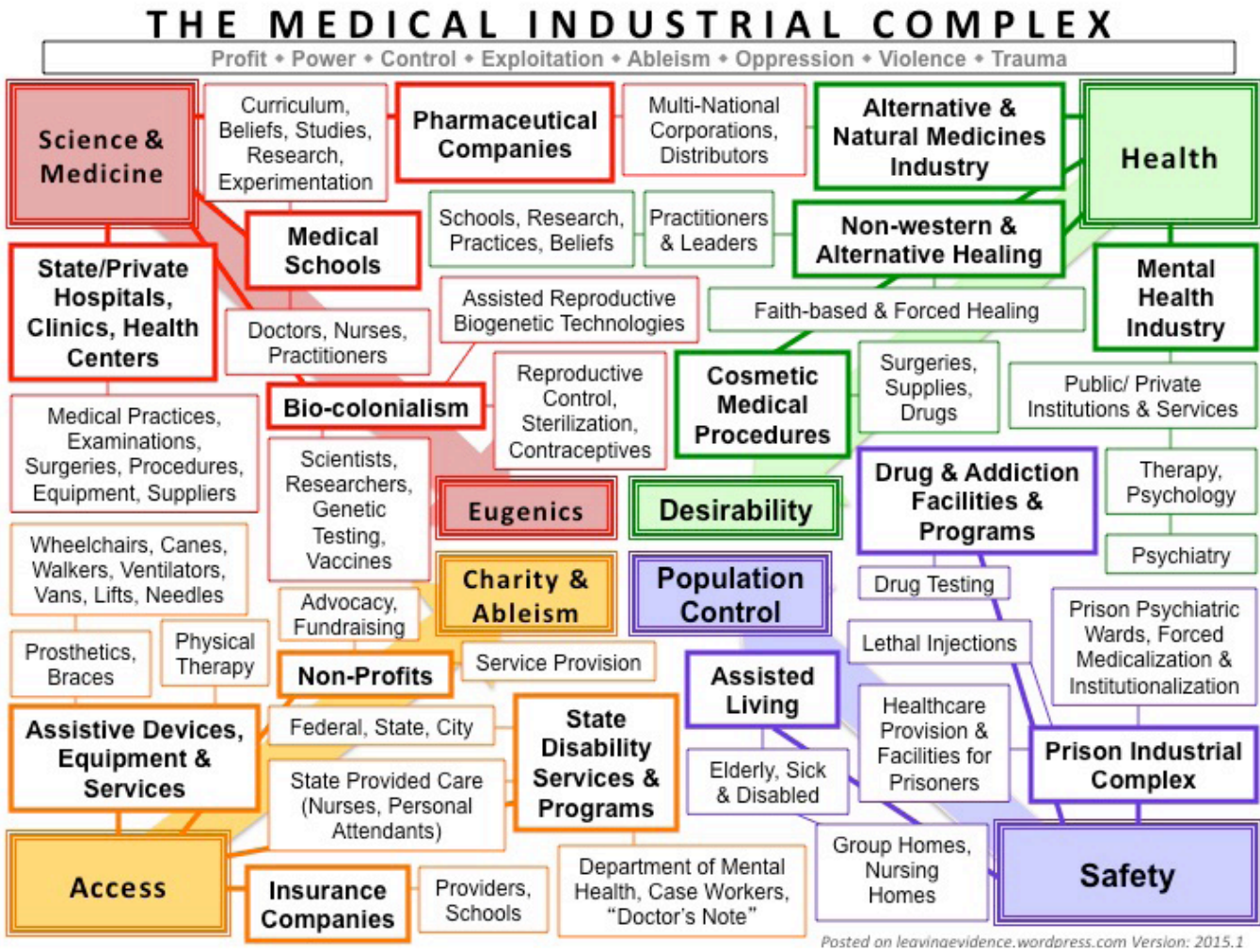
your body, but the planet and future generations as well?

We have so much shared ground when it comes to being able to answer the ever-present question, “What could true wellness and care look like for our communities?”

In this visual, there are 4 distinct sections that make up the underlying core motivations of the MIC: Eugenics, Charity and Ableism, Population Control and Desirability. These are part of what allow the MIC to continue to be profitable. Not only do they anchor each of the 4 sections shown here, but they permeate through the entire MIC. For example, Eugenics anchors Science and Medicine, but is absolutely a part of how we have been taught to understand Safety and is a cornerstone of Population Control. Desirability anchors Health, which includes everything from the Alternative and Natural Medicines Industry to Cosmetic Medical Procedures. Charity and Ableism anchor Access and reminds us how access is still understood as charity, rather than justice. Population Control is often done in the name of Safety, but is most certainly a part of Science and Medicine as well.

Since nothing listed is mutually exclusive and many of these boxes overlap, there are connections that can be made throughout the entire visual. For example, the Mental Health Industry boxes are intentionally positioned to slide right down into the Prison Industrial Complex, especially given that the largest mental institution in the U.S. is part of a county jail in LA. The same is true for the placement of Bio-colonialism and Cosmetic Medical Procedures since they both so aptly reflect the motivations of Eugenics and Desirability, respectively. Non-profits were included directly next to Charity and Eugenics because of the ways that they have helped to framed how we understand things such as “cure” and “rescue,” and dutifully fundraised millions of dollars in the process.

What would it mean to not have to be afraid of going to the doctor? To be able to trust that the care and treatments you are receiving will not only take care of



to creating more versions. I hope this is the beginning of all kinds of different tools (i.e. more visuals, writings, breakdowns, art and education) for understanding the MIC because there is so much work to be done.

**There are many important people who helped create this visual from its inception 6 years ago, to the huge mass of colorful webs it is today. The original version of this visual was created in collaboration with Cara Page and Patty Berne for the January 2009 workshop, “Re-envisioning the Revolutionary Body: Disability, Race, Queerness and the Possibility of Cross-movement Building.” Deep thanks go to both of them for their ongoing work for healing justice and disability justice. Over the last 6 years, I continued to rework the visual by adding more information, re-organizing the layout, and re-formatting it. I played around with many different breakdowns before finally settling on this 4-part framework of Eugenics, Charity and Ableism, Population Control, and Desirability. I asked for (and got) a ton of feedback on it from great individuals across the U.S. and Canada who attended workshops and talks I gave. Friends and comrades also gave feedback and much needed support on formatting, arranging and content. I would especially like to thank two fellow disability justice activists who have been pivotal in thinking through the content of the MIC with me in the last 3 years. This visual would not exist as it is today without them and they have given so much of their time and heart to both the larger framing, as well as the minutia. They have asked to remain anonymous, due to safety concerns of being public about their disabilities, so I will just say, “thank you, thank you, thank you.”*

Originally published on Leaving Evidence by Mia Mingus. February 5, 2015.

BLACK AND PINK PRISONER TO PRISONER WRITING SURVEY Mail TO: Black & Pink - Feedback P2P Survey Dorchester, MA 02125

Errors were made when entering this question from pen pal forms. We are asking again, to make sure no one gets in trouble!

Name, Number, and State: _____

Are you allowed to write to other prisoners? YES NO
If YES, are there any restrictions placed on writing? _____

Do you use Corrlinks? YES NO
[] I give permission to send my bio, address, & details from my penpal form to other prisoners

BLACK & PINK INCARCERATED FAMILY FEEDBACK! MAIL TO: Black & Pink - FEEDBACK Dorchester, MA 02125

-----rip slip here-----

We recognize that not all of the ways of coping suggested in the “Emotional First Aid” article are possible in prison. What are some ways that you take care of yourself and practice self care when you are in emotional crises, or just day to day? We welcome you to share your strategies for print in the newspaper.

“OPERATION STREAMLINE”: THE NEW PRISON BOOM



Efrain Alejandro, a Mexican who has twice served prison time in the United States for illegally crossing the border, at the Kino Border Initiative shelter in Nogales, Mexico, January 28, 2014. Migrants like Alejandro are meant to be discouraged by the special courts known as Operation Streamline, but the resulting mass deportations have led to accusations of assembly-line justice. (Photo: Samantha Sais / The New York Times)

on the makeup of the criminal justice system.

The immigration issue in this country is complex on many levels from the personal, political and economical. If one looks at it from the perspective of a woman, man or child caught crossing illegally, then held in jail up to 15 months, one must ask what is going on with the new prison industrial system. The war on immigrants is replacing the previous war on drugs that filled the jails and made obscene profits for private prisons. This new prison boom is foremost in states along the border with Mexico such as Texas, California, Arizona and New Mexico. In Texas it costs the state \$266/day to house a person not including food. That’s \$97,090 per year paid for by taxpayers.

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder announced reforms to the nation’s drug sentencing laws in an attempt to reduce the number of federal inmates held on non-violent drug charges. “It’s great that Eric Holder is talking about over-incarceration, but the actions he’s taking are not tackling the full scope of the problem,” said Carl Takei, a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union’s National Prison Project. “There’s this whole other population that’s looming in the background, and growing.”

Advocates for reducing incarceration say that true reform of the prison system must also address the criminalization of immigration since reducing punishment for drug offenders is unlikely to affect the private prison industry.

“If you look at where the private operators reside, it’s primarily immigration,” said Kevin McVeigh, a senior analyst with Macquarie Group who follows the private prison industry. “So if you think about where Holder is positioning with these reforms, it really doesn’t impact them from an incarceration perspective.”

The expanding pool of federal inmates has meant steady business for the two largest U.S. private prison corporations. Last year, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) received 30 percent of its revenue from federal contracts with the U.S. Marshals Service and the Bureau of Prisons, a total of \$546 million, according to company financial statements. The GEO Group received more than 25 percent of its revenue from those two agencies last year, a total of \$384 million. Both companies have spent millions of dollars lobbying the federal government over the past decade, and four of CCA’s senior executives came from the federal Bureau of Prisons. A GEO Group board member, Norman Carlson, was a former Bureau of Prisons director. CCA says that its lobbying efforts are meant to “educate decision-makers on the merits and benefits of public-private partnerships.”

“The war on immigrants is surpassing efforts to reform the war on drugs,” said Bob Libal, executive director of Grassroots Leadership, a criminal justice advocacy group. “We will not be able to reduce the federal prison population unless we stop prosecuting so many people for immigration violations.”

Things are looking grim for immigrants due to provisions in immigration legislation passed by the Senate in June, and more stringent measures being considered by the House that would increase arrests and prosecutions of those crossing the border. A Congressional Budget Office analysis of the Senate immigration legislation estimated that increased funding for enforcement and prosecution of undocumented immigrants in the bill would result in an additional 14,000 inmates per year in the federal prison system, at a cost of \$1.6 billion over the next decade.

This amounts to an unprecedented campaign to criminally prosecute undocumented immigrants crossing the border. “This is the crime du jour,” said Judith Greene, director of the nonprofit Justice Strategies, which has focused on the private prison industry’s growing reliance on incarcerating undocumented immigrants. “It’s the drug war all over again. It’s what’s driving the market in federal prisons.”

What is “Operation Streamline”? It’s a U.S. Border Patrol Operation that began in 2005 under G. W. Bush. This law makes jail time mandatory for people convicted of illegal entry or re-entry into the United States. The plan was designed to get tough on illegal immigration by arresting and prosecuting those crossing the border, instead of simply deporting them or placing them in a civil detention center. This made the private prison industry a very profitable sector since they started incarcerating these immigrants. According to a report released last year by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, more than 80 percent of immigration defendants convicted in federal court since 2010 received a prison sentence. This has had a dramatic effect

According to The Credit: Bureau of Justice Statistics, the more than 60,000 people convicted of immigration crimes this year were primarily guilty of one or two things: coming into the country without authorization, or doing it again: “illegal entry,” or “illegal re-entry.” Immigrants make up 11 percent of those in federal prisons, but this year, more than 60 percent of all federal criminal convictions have been for immigration-related crimes, federal data show.

The U.S. is a country where prisons are private corporations that profit from “lockup quotas.” It’s a country where taxpayers pay for empty beds should crime rates fall below that quota. How many people know that? Not many.

In Arizona three privately run jails have contracts that require 100 percent inmate occupancy, so the state is obligated to keep its prisons filled to capacity. Otherwise it has to pay the private company for any unused beds. The main incentive for private prisons is to make money and they lobby politicians to keep it that way.

This contract clause does nothing to promote rehabilitation, crime reduction, or community building. Reverend Michael McBride, director of Urban Strategies and Lifelines to Healing at PICO National Network said the real human impact of having lockup quotas was unjustifiable. “It’s important for us to step back and look at this from a moral perspective; all people of any faith or no faith at all can claim it’s reprehensible to imprison someone just to make money,” he said. “It’s important to always remember every single person is a human being ... even if they have done something we may find problematic or illegal. They are not profit incentives.”

Private prisons rule with little oversight and this enables the widespread mistreatment of inmates, according to a multi-year investigation by the ACLU’s National Prison Project. Their report compiles testimonies from prisoners who describe overcrowded, unsanitary facilities, inadequate food and substandard medical care. Some living quarters, like those at the Willacy County Correctional Center in southeast Texas, are nothing more than Kevlar tents filled with closely-packed rows of bunk beds with overflowing toilets, and plenty of bugs. Prisoners also face discrimination, verbal and sexual abuse from guards. A PBS Frontline report last year found that undocumented immigrants had filed more than 170 allegations of sexual abuse against detention center staff.

Also according to the ACLU, Bureau of Prisons require Texas’s jails to set aside 10 percent of their bed space for isolation cells. And now prisoners report being sent to isolation for little to no reason at all. Some say anything as small as complaining about medical care, requesting new shoes, or even speaking Spanish has landed them in isolation. Others report being sent directly to isolation cells upon arrival — not because they’d done anything wrong, but because that’s where the only available beds were — and remaining trapped there for days or weeks after they arrived. “This is a story about the consequences of the criminalization of immigration,” said Carl Takei, of the ACLU’s National Prison Project. “It enriches the profit prison industry to a huge cost to the taxpayers, allows shocking abuses without oversight, and it tears families apart.”

“Meanwhile, the costs of the increased prosecutions are significant and growing,” the HRC report states. “The costs include an estimated \$1 billion annually in incarceration costs alone and lasting damage to the lives of migrants and their family members, tens of thousands of whom are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.”

“If passed by the House of Representatives, the comprehensive immigration reform bill that passed the Senate last year would triple the budget for Operation Streamline, increasing the quota of illegal entry prosecutions as well as the quantity of private jails,” says Takei from the ACLU.

Pearsall is a small Texas town decorated with churches, shops and a high-school football field. It has a jail that can house up to 1,800 men at any one time, sleeping on iron bunk-beds in dormitories of up to 100. This is not a jail but it is surrounded by fences topped with razor wire and is run by the GEO Group. The Pearsall detention facility is quiet inside, apart from the noise of thick metal doors opening and closing.

As long as Operation Streamline continues to make billions for the prison industrial complex, the politicians they control will continue passing laws to criminalize immigration. And more towns like Pearsall will open up facilities to house human beings entering or re-entering this country. This is bound to grow worse now that Republicans control both chambers in Congress.

Originally published on Truth Out by By Leticia Cortez and El BeiSMan on February 8, 2015.

EMOTIONAL FIRST AID



Art by Charles, TX

Editor’s Note: This article was not written with people in prison in mind. The article provides some personal strategies for taking care of yourself when in crisis, but not all of these strategies are available to someone who is incarcerated. Despite this, we hope that some of these strategies will be helpful. We welcome you to share your own strategies to print in the newspaper. Please respond through the feedback slip on page 9.

When I talk about Emotional First Aid I mean simple, body-based practices that can help us shift from triggered, reactive states, into centered, creative states. I’ve put together a “kit” of these portable, easy-to-learn tools to soothe us when we are in crisis-mode, so we can make better choices.

I would like to share with you some of the principles and practices I teach in my Emotional First Aid workshops.

Before I do, let’s look at what happens when we are triggered.

Automatic Survival Strategies: Fight, Flight, Freeze, Appease & Dissociate

Being stressed out or triggered starts when our animal body perceives a threat coming our way. Our reptilian brain (or brain stem) and limbic brain respond swiftly together to restore us to safety. Before we know it, before we know why, we react. You may know this swift reaction as the “fight or flight” response.

“Fight or flight” is actually a repertoire of at least five automatic survival responses: fight, flight, freeze, appease, and dissociate.

The fight response can show up as clenching the jaw and/or hands/arms, or it can look like defensiveness, argumentativeness.

The flight response can involve actually leaving the scene, or it can show up as our muscles pulling back and away from a perceived threat. It can also take the form of distracting from or avoiding certain subjects.

By the same token, a freeze response can mean silence, holding our breath, feeling paralyzed. On the outside, we may seem poker-faced or extremely calm.

The appease response can look like smiling, submissive body language, or letting others invade our physical space. It can also show up as caretaking others, “making nice” or trying to smooth things over.

The dissociate response involves “checking out” from our experience, not noticing our sensations and feelings. This can show up as a faraway look in our eyes, or a feeling that we are not “all there.” It looks like emotional detachment, forgetfulness, being caught up in our thoughts, or trying to figure out everything.

These survival responses are swift and automatic. We cannot stop them. That’s a good thing—survival strategies have kept our species alive by overriding slower brain/body functions. When a predator is chasing you, it’s not the time for strategy and reflection. The goal is to stay alive to strategize and reflect later. In a crisis, survival responses will kick in faster than anything else.

It’s important to accept that fact, especially when we feel hijacked by our survival strategies. When we see ourselves automatically placating (appease) others, or staying silent (freeze) when it’s time to speak up about injustice, it is easy to blame ourselves.

It may seem counterintuitive to accept and appreciate our survival responses, but if we judge ourselves for our automatic survival reactions, that “I am bad!” message keeps our reptilian brain in reactive mode. If instead we can notice when we are in our survival responses, we can gradually reduce the length of time we spend in these reactive states. Learning how to soothe our brains and bodies with compassion and patience is key.

Emotional first aid practices can help us notice early on when we are triggered or reactive, and help us soothe and re-center ourselves.

Principles & Practices of Emotional First Aid: GRASP

I like to sum up Emotional First Aid principles and practices with the acronym GRASP, or Ground, Restore, Awareness, Safety, and Practice.

GRASP reminds me that when I get really “wound up” or “shut down,” I am/ my body is grasping onto something. My reactions may be unconscious and automatic, but they are mine. In other words, when I freak out or shut down, no one is doing this to me—it is my body reacting to stress by tightening itself up. I am the one doing it. This means I can learn to ungrasp. Emotional first aid practices help us notice we are grasping, and give us ways to soften our grip and create options.

GROUND

To ground is to feel connected to and rooted in the earth. This means being present and alive in your lower body, legs and feet. Here are some simple grounding practices:

- While standing, sitting or lying down, pay attention to the support you are receiving from the chair/floor/earth. Pay close attention to the sensations in your back, butt and feet. Really notice the sensations in your muscles and nerve endings; notice how the contact and pressure of the floor or chair comes up to meet your body. When you lie down on the floor, imagine the vast earth beneath it supporting your back. Feel how deep, broad and reliable this support is; pay attention to your sensations as you sink into it.
- Ground in “what is” by sending healing energy to any place in your body that is in distress. Imagine the earth’s energy is coming up through your feet and flowing through your body and out the top of your head. At the same time, imagine the energy of the sky is flowing into the top of your head, down through your body and out your tailbone. As this dual flow continues, rub your hands together to wake up the energy centers in your palms. Imagine the earth and sky energies gathering and blending in your heart, flowing into your shoulders, arms, and gathering between your hands. Choosing a part of your body that feels uncomfortable or tense, bring your energized hands to that part, allowing the energy to flow in. Stay with this for a few minutes; notice what happens.
- Take three deep breaths, letting each exhalation fall out with a big sigh.

RESTORE

To restore is to return to a state of hope, connection and balance. Here are some simple restoring practices:

- Appreciations— speak aloud or write down 1-3 things you appreciate or feel grateful for; slow down and savor the feelings.
- Recreating resilience: think about an activity or being that makes you feel really good, or hopeful. This may include creative or athletic expression (drawing, singing, dancing, knitting, running, swimming etc) connecting to Spirit, animals, nature, or loved ones or community. Stay with this feeling for a few minutes; gain, really savor the feelings and sensations in your muscles and skin as you remember this experience.
- Try this energy healing balancing breath (This practice is nice to do as you are falling asleep):
Repeat each step 3 times:
 - Imagine as you inhale that you are bringing breath into the sole of your left foot and up your leg, into your buttock; as you exhale, send the exhalation through your right buttock, down your right leg, and out your right foot.
 - Reverse this, inhaling into the right foot, up through the right leg, and out the left leg and foot.
 - Breathe in through the left foot/leg and out the right shoulder, arm and hand.
 - Breathe in through the right leg and out the left arm.
 - Breathe in through the left arm, and out the right arm.
 - Reverse.
 - Breathe in through the left hand/arm, out the right leg.
 - Breathe in through the right hand/arm, out through the left leg Remember to do each side three times.

AWARENESS

Awareness means being grounded in “what is” by feeling the sensations in your body. Here are some simple Awareness practices:

•Practice feeling and identifying the sensations in your body (sensations can include temperature, movement or stillness, blankness or numbness, a sense of contact or pressure, or imagery (for example, your arms may feel like wings or your knees like bowling balls). Spend a few seconds being right inside the heart of each sensation.

•Name the mood in your body (if my body was a person, what would their mood be?)

•Notice where you feel tense or exposed/vulnerable in your body?

If you notice your body feels unsafe, try some of the “HEY” practices below.

SAFETY (HEY)

Safety means giving your body experiences of feeling safe, where your body feels protected and/or able to take care of itself.

There are three safety principles that I find to be helpful. I gave them the acronym HEY, which represents Holding, Escape, and Yes.

Holding

Holding means giving your body a feeling of being held, of having a sense of boundary, of beginning and end. You can give yourself this feeling with or without props. Here are some holding practices:

With props: you can use blankets, pillows, eyebags or sandbags, a wall, the floor, or water to give your body a sense of being held. You could put a sandbag on your chest, or hide under a pile of pillows, get in a warm bath and feel the water holding your skin, or wrap yourself in blankets. You can wear a thick scarf or hoodie and feel the coziness. Notice which parts of your body like being held the most, and notice how you feel when you allow yourself to really rest inside that holding. You can also give yourself a sense of holding without props. You can push your arms against your sides; push your legs together; cradle your arm(s) around your head, push your feet against a wall, and notice where you begin and end. Do each of these gently but firmly for at least five seconds, then pause and repeat. Notice which of these practices feel good to you. [...]

YES

YES means collaborating with whatever your body is doing. Here is how it works:

When you find areas of contraction or tension in your body, say “yes” to them. Give them the benefit of the doubt, and tell you trust they are working hard to take care of you. Tell them they are doing a good job! As you say yes, gently increase the tension or holding for a few seconds. Act like you and your body are a team, doing something important together. See what happens when you join with your body appreciatively instead of fighting it...the body always feels safer when we appreciate and support its efforts. Often with safety comes softening.

PRACTICE

The principle of practice encompasses both action and attitude. Practice as action involves doing something over and over until it “comes naturally.” Practice as attitude means practicing is the focus (not achievement).

You need to practice something at least 300 times for it to become familiar, and 3000 times for the practice to become part of you.

If this seems like a lot, ask yourself how many times you have practiced putting on your shoes. How many times have you practiced criticizing yourself (yet

another thing that stimulates the fight or flight response)?

Try out the above practices briefly and often. Brief, daily practices are more effective than long, occasional practice. The key is repetition over time The more we practice, the more these practices become speed dial buttons that allow us to recover our grounding and sense of safety very quickly. Keep your practice light.

Bring curiosity and exploration into your practice. Practice to discover what practices your body likes best, and then give your body these gifts as often as possible.

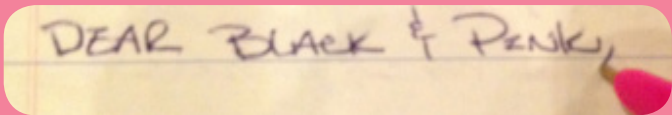
Practice is an ordinary, often unconscious part of life that you can turn into a conscious choice. Each day set the intention to practice what you want to be; when you practice you are the sculptor sculpting yourself. What you practice is what you embody. And it is a way to create good karma.

By Vanissar Tarakali Many thanks to Denise Benson, Staci Haines, Phyllis Pay, Joann Lyons, and my Dharma teachers for their wisdom and support.

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	FRI	2	9	16	23	30
	THU	1	8	15	22	29
	WED		7	14	21	28
	TUE		6	13	20	27
	MON		5	12	19	26
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